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ABSTRACT

This study examined the differences between Type A and B individuals and their hardiness. Although it is thought to be an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease, the role of Type A behavior in other disease processes or general health has not been established. Because Type A has been hypothesized to be a maladaptive coping strategy against stress, one might expect the behavior pattern to act as an augmenting stress-moderating variable. To test this hypothesis, two self-report measures were administered to the 150 participants in the sample. The Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS) was used for assessing Type A and B behavioral patterns among participants and the Hardiness Questionnaire was used to determine those participants with hardy personalities who seem especially stress-resistant. There were 74 Type A personalities and 76 Type B personalities in the sample. A multivariate analysis was conducted to examine how Type A personalities differed from Type B personalities on hardiness and the three subscales of the Hardiness Questionnaire, which are commitment, control and challenge. Results indicated that Type A individuals had significantly higher hardiness scores than Type B individuals. Further analysis revealed significant differences between Type A and B individuals on the Hardiness Questionnaire subscale of commitment. (Author/LLL)

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An Examination of the Differences Between Type A and B Individuals on Hardiness

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine the differences between Type A and B individuals and their hardiness. Two self-report measures were administered to the 150 participants in the sample. The Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS) was used for assessing Type A and B behavioral patterns among participants and the Hardiness Questionnaire was used to determine those participants with hardy personalities who seem especially stress-resistant. There were 74 Type A personalities and 76 Type B personalities in the sample.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine how Type A personalities differed from Type B personalities on hardiness and the three subscales of the Hardiness Questionnaire which are commitment, control and challenge. Results indicated that Type A individuals had significantly higher hardiness scores than that of Type B personalities (Type A x= 3.541; Type B x= 2.026). Further analysis revealed significant differences between Type A and B individuals on the Hardiness Questionnaire subscale of commitment.

An Examination of the Differences Between Type A and B Individuals on Hardiness

During the past two decades an abundance of research has established the existence of a positive relationship between major life-events and health status (e.g. Garrity, Marx, & Somes, 1978; Holmes & Masuda, 1974). This relationship, however, has generally been weak and inconsistent, with correlations ranging from 0.1 to 0.3 (Kobasa, 1979). Consequently, the role of moderating variables has been included as an area of empirical study. Such variables include social support, personality characteristics, family constitution, cognitive hardiness and coping skills (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Kobasa, 1979). In 1979 a new concept that attempted to explain why some persons are impervious to the debilitating effects of stressful life events was introduced. Integrating various theoretical and empirical leads, Kobasa (1979) proposed the construct of cognitive hardiness.

Kobasa's original study consisted of a group of male executives separated into high stress/high illness and high stress/low illness groups. These groups were then differentiated on the basis of a battery of personality scales. The personality characteristics that best achieved this dichotomization represented three factors that

constituted the general concept of hardiness: commitment, challenge, and control. The commitment factor reflects a sense of meaningfulness about one's life both in terms of self, work, family, community, and other personal life goals. Control represents the belief that one can influence or be responsible for one's experiences and life events. Finally, the challenge factor consists of the idea that change in one's life is a challenge to master. Challenge being a positive phenomenon with the potential of personal growth for the individual (Kobasa, 1982). The hardy individual possesses a strong sense of all three traits, which act together to help buffer the debilitating effects of life stresses.

Considerable attention has focused on the role of the Type A-B behavioral patterns on health and well-being (Glass, 1977). The Type A behavioral style characterizes an individual who is hard-driving, concerned about time urgency, competitive, and hostile when perceiving environmental events as challenging, stressful, or threatening. In contrast, Type B individuals exhibit behavior that is simply defined as the relative absence of Type A characteristics (Glass, 1977; Friedman & Rosenman, 1977). This behavioral pattern has been shown to be significantly related to the development of coronary heart disease and hence is an important variable to be included in stress research studies (Glass, 1977).

Although thought to be an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease, the role of Type A behavior in other disease processes or general health is not so well established. However, because Type A behavior has been hypothesized to be a maladaptive coping strategy against stress, one might expect the behavior pattern to act as an augmenting stress-moderating variable (Schmied & Lawler, 1986). Kobasa et al. (1983) put this hypothesis to the test and examined interactive effects that might occur between hardiness, stress, and Type A behavior. Despite obvious similarities with the Type A pattern, Kobasa, Maddi and Zola (1983) report that hardiness and Type A do not appear to be correlated, even though their combined effects may result in different reactions to stress. It is the latter study that is of particular interest to the present research endeavor.

Based upon this latter finding, it might be hypothesized that differences may exist between Type A individuals and Type B individuals and their stress-resistance or hardiness. The purpose of this study being to explore the differences that might exist between Type A and B individuals on the dependent variable of hardiness and its three factors of commitment, control, and challenge.

METHOD

Subjects and Procedures

The participants were 148 college students (50 males, 98 females) enrolled in undergraduate courses at Emporia State University.

Measurements

The Modified Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS) and a shortened form of the Hardiness Questionnaire developed by Kobasa (1984) were the two self-report measures employed in the current study. The modified JAS is a 21-item, multiple choice questionnaire having a normative mean of 8 and a standard deviation of 4. The median-split procedure was employed to divide Type A individuals from Type B individuals. The shortened version of the Hardiness Questionnaire is a 12-item Likert type scale broken into 3 subscales of commitment, control, and challenge.

Procedure

Testing took place during regular class sessions. The testing instruments were combined into a booklet and were self-administered.

RESULTS

Of the 222 undergraduates who completed the two instruments, 148 cases were completed for analysis. The data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS/PC). Cell means and standard deviations can be seen in Table 1 in the handout.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent

Dependent Measure	Type A			Type B		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Hardiness	74	3.541	4.105	76	2.026	4.430
Commitment	74	1.824	2.211	76	.684	2.373
Control	74	1.486	1.903	76	1.355	2.171
Challenge	74	.257	1.588	76	.039	1.949

A MANOVA consisting of four one-way ANOVA's were used to compare the cell means. The results can be seen in Table 2 in the handout.

Table 2. Results of MANOVA

Variable	df	MS	F
Hardiness	1,148	85.967	.032*
Commitment	1,148	48.736	.003*
Control	1,148	.645	.695
Challenge	1,148	1.770	.456

*p > .05

These results have led to the following conclusions: significant differences were observed between Type A and B individuals on overall hardiness scale and the subscale of commitment. However, no significant differences were found to exist between Type A and B individuals on the subscales of control or challenge.

DISCUSSION

Measures of Type A and B behavior and hardiness were collected from a sample of 148 male and female undergraduate college students. There was a significant difference between Type A and B individuals on the subscale of commitment. Type A's seem to be more committed to work, self, family and community than Type B individuals in this sample. Further, it seems that the significant difference reported between Type A's and B's on hardiness was mainly a result of the significance found on the subscale of commitment. So, while the findings of this study seem to indicate that Type A individuals have hardier personalities than Type B individuals, this may be due in part to the observed differences between Type A's and B's on the commitment dimension.

In summary, neither the control nor challenge factors of hardiness seemed to differ in relation to Type A and B individuals. Type A's did significantly score higher on the commitment factor than did Type B's and also on overall hardiness.

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